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ABSTRACT

The National Education Association (NEA) Task Force on Testing's position statement on educational and psychological testing, originally presented at the 1973 Representative Assembly of NEA, is reinforced for the 1975 assembly. In summary, the task force believes that the major use of tests should be to improve instruction--to diagnose learning difficulties and to plan learning activities in response to learning needs. Tests must not be used in any way to label and classify students, to track students into homogeneous groups, to determine educational programs, to perpetuate an elitism, or to maintain some groups and individuals in their place near the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. In short, tests must not be used in ways that will deny any student full access to equal educational opportunity. Furthermore, the task force encourages NEA to continue seeking appropriate ways of countering the widespread misuses and abuses of testing as they relate to evaluation of students and teachers, particularly those with different economic, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds. Important court decisions concerning testing are presented. Position papers developed by the task force are described, and a brief bibliography is appended. (Author/MV)

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REPORTS of Committees, Councils, and Task Forces 1974-75

Presented to the Fifty-Fourth Representative Assembly of the National Education Association

REPORT OF THE NEA TASK FORCE ON TESTING

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NEA

National Education Association
1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W
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INTRODUCTION

This report is submitted to the 1975 Representative Assembly by the Task Force on Testing in fulfillment of its responsibilities under New Business Items 51 and 28, adopted by the 1972 Assembly, which stated:

> The NEA shall establish a task force to deal with the numerous and complex problems communicated to t under the general heading of testing. This task force shall report its findings and proposals for further action at the 1973 Representative Assembly. (Item 1972-51)

> This Representative Assembly directs the National Education Association to immediately call a national moratorium on standardized testing and at the same time set up a task force on standardized testing to research and make its findings available to the 1975 Representative Assembly for further action. (Item 1972-28)

In the report of its findings to the 1973 Representative Assembly the Task Force set down some well-founded beliefs which have drawn a significant amount of attention from both inside and outside the profession. Follow-up efforts served to further verify and intensify the positions taken. The Task Force feels, therefore, that the most appropriate final report it can make to the 1975 Representative Assembly is a reinforcement and redeclaration of those beliefs, with recommendations to the Association (a) to make them the basis for future NEA policy on testing issues and (b) to continue seeking, through appropriate program and other efforts, ways of countering widespread misuse and abuses in educational and psychological testing as they relate to teachers and students, particularly those who are culturally and linguistically different.

The Task Force also addresses itself here to matters which have added weight to its stated beliefs—to important court actions, some of which involve the united teaching profession; to the valuable liaisons it has established with other groups; to special writings developed for use by the Task Force; to supportive literature; and to the moratorium issue.

The Task Force is indebted to the many persons who contributed their expertise to its total three-year effort through personal or indirect testimony, consultation, or other assistance, and to those who have taken notice of its findings.

This report was approved by the NEA Task Force on Testing at its final meeting on April 5, 1975, by unanimous vote of the members present.

TASK FORCE POSITIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

As stated in its first interim report and as strengthened in further deliberation on the issues, the NEA Task Force on Testing believes:[1]

1. *That some measurement and evaluation in education is necessary.*
2. *That some of the measurement and evaluation tools developed over the years, and currently in use, contain satisfactory validity and reliability requirements and serve useful purposes when properly administered and interpreted.*
3. *That certain measurement and evaluation tools are either invalid and unreliable, out of date, or unfair and should be withdrawn from use.*
4. *That the training of those who use measurement and evaluation tools is woefully inadequate and that schools of education, school systems, the education profession, and the testing industry all must take responsibility for correcting these inadequacies. Such training must develop understanding about the limitations of tests in predicting potential learning ability, about their lack of validity in measuring innate characteristics, and their dehumanizing effects on many students. It must also develop understanding of students' rights related to testing and the use of test results.*
5. *That there is overkill in the use of tests and that the intended purposes of testing can be accomplished through the use of individual diagnostic instruments, through sampling techniques which involve the use of tests, and through a variety of alternatives to tests.*
6. *That the National Teacher Examinations are an improper tool and must not be used for teacher certification, recertification, selection, assignment, retention, salary determination, promotion, transfer, tenure, or dismissal.*
7. *That no test results should be used as a basis for allocation of federal, state, or local funds.*
8. *That no tests should be used for tracking students.*

[1] For supporting arguments, see the first interim report in *Task Force and Other Reports* presented to the Fifty-Second Representative Assembly of the National Education Association, July 3-6, 1973, Portland, Oregon (pp. 26-46).

9. *That while the purposes and procedures of the National Assessment of Education may have been initially sound, a number of state adaptations of the program—in Michigan[2] and New Jersey, for example—have subverted the original intent and as a result are harmful.*

10. *That both the content and the use of the typical group intelligence test are biased against those who are economically disadvantaged and culturally and linguistically different. In fact, group intelligence tests are potentially harmful to all students.*

11. *That the use of the typical intelligence test contributes to what has come to be termed "the self-fulfilling prophecy," whereby students' achievement tends to fulfill the expectations held by others.*

12. *That test results are often used by educators, students, and parents in ways that are damaging to the self-concept of many students.*

13. *That the testing industry must demonstrate significantly increased responsibility for validity, reliability, and relevance of their tests, for their fair application, and for accurate and just interpretation and use of the results.*

14. *That the public, and some in the profession, misinterpret the results of tests as they relate to status and needs of groups of students as well as to individual students.*

15. *That the overemphasis in assessment programs on testing recall-type, cognitive facts has tended to shift teaching emphasis to tasks which are simple and easy to measure and has resulted in serious inattention to the complex, higher-level mental processes and to affective skills and attitudes which are so difficult to measure but which are equally and, in some respects, more important.*

In summary, the Task Force believes:

> *That the major use of tests should be to improve instruction—to diagnose learning difficulties and to plan learning activities in response to learning needs. Tests must not be used in any way to label and classify students, to track students into homogeneous groups, to determine educational programs, to perpetuate an elitism, or to maintain some groups and individuals "in their place" near the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. In short, tests must not be used in ways that will deny any student full access to equal educational opportunity.*

Some Special Considerations

EFFECTS OF TESTS ON MINORITIES

Throughout its study the Task Force has been especially impressed with the depth of feeling and the weight of evidence against group standardized tests as reliable/valid measures of achievement and intelligence. Throughout its stated beliefs it has alluded to the injurious and prejudicial aspects of such tests. The term *standardized* implies homogeneity, stereotyping, and equalized development and achievement, and is contradictory to the best interests of a pluralistic society. The practice of standardized testing has, in fact, deprived minorities—the economically disadvantaged, culturally and linguistically different, and women—access to equal educational opportunity.

Traditional IQ testing particularly has come under increasingly heavy attack for falsely labeling many minority children as "mentally retarded," based on what Jane Mercer has termed Anglocentric measures.[3] Such tests are touted as reliable/valid measures of the ability and achievement of varying populations even though the test-takers' educational and cultural backgrounds, opportunities, and experiences may be markedly different from those on whom the tests are standardized.

Recently, Robert L. Green, educational psychologist and dean of the College of Urban Development at Michigan State University, called intelligence testing "the awesome danger" and pointed to the potential compounding of that danger by continued use of traditional IQ tests:

> . . . experiences of black and other minority children are not reflected in the content of the test. This bias is even more apparent when the child's opportunities have been limited due to poverty. Consequently, many black children start test-taking with a good chance of "flunking" an "experience" they have never been exposed to . . . . When a child is labeled as a "ne'er-do-well" in the early grades and is forced to keep wearing that label, important educational opportunities are denied him. Sometimes he may never be

[2] House, Ernest; Rivers, Wendell; and Stufflebeam, Daniel. *An Assessment of the Michigan Accountability System.* Michigan Education Association and National Education Association, March 1974.

[3] See the section on "Supportive Literature" for a citation of Mercer's study.

> taught to read; he certainly will not be given access to college preparation courses. Discrimination in education means disadvantage in the job market. A low-paying job means low-income status—so a test victim's children may become test victims themselves.[4]

Widespread dissemination of test results which can be easily misinterpreted, cases of invasion of privacy, and proposals for educational funding on the basis of test scores add further evidence of the potential harmfulness of standardized testing.

The Task Force restates emphatically that since currently used standardized tests in general are developed and normed for students of Anglo-American middle-class culture and economic status, any use of the results of standardized testing to place or track students, to denigrate minority intelligence, to discriminate against groups or individuals, to restrict funding of programs, or to misinform the public constitutes deplorable practice and denies access to equal opportunity.

The Task Force calls for a humanistic approach to student evaluation on the part of all those who have a role and responsibility in the process. In particular:

- The Task Force urges teachers
  - to develop understanding of their students' socioeconomic backgrounds and sensitivity to their individual needs and problems
  - to refuse to administer tests which they find to be biased
  - to secure by appropriate means their right to be involved in school and school district decision making related to testing
  - to exert collective influence on the testing industry and on state and local school systems in order to secure from them a firm commitment to evaluation programs, the purpose of which is not to compare students but to improve instruction.
- The Task Force urges spokespersons of all cultures to continue exposing erroneous contentions that some groups in society are genetically less intelligent than others.
- The Task Force urges the testing industry to take greatly increased responsibility for turning out fair and bias-free tests and for constantly monitoring the distribution and application of their products to ensure proper use.
- The Task Force urges education agencies at all levels to institute sampling procedures for all large-scale assessments, the results of which should be used for general information purposes only.

COURT ACTIONS

Years of controversy over testing practices has also led to civil suits. The continued use of tests in teacher licensure and hiring and continued use of biased instruments with students who are disadvantaged and culturally and linguistically different increase the possibilities for legal action against school systems and the almost unregulated testing industry.

In 1971 the Supreme Court ruled in *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* that tests given to job applicants had to be job-related. This case has been cited in court decisions related to standardized testing of teachers. It was referred to, for example, in the 1974 decision in favor of 13 Black teachers against the school board of Nansemond County, Virginia, as were arguments presented by the NEA in an amicus curiae brief. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled unconstitutional a hiring requirement that teachers take the National Teacher Examinations (NTE) and achieve a minimum score on the common examination. The effect of the requirement was to substantially diminish the Black teaching force. The ruling overturned the trial court's conclusion that the test had content validity, noting that no evidence was presented which established a relationship between questions on the test and knowledge required for teaching, and that it was arbitrary to apply a general knowledge test to teachers of different subjects because their jobs are substantially different.

The Nansemond case is likely to have positive impact on pending litigation in North Carolina in which the united teaching profession is involved. The NEA and the state affiliate have intervened in a Justice Department suit challenging the validity of state requirements for minimum NTE scores for certification purposes which affect both employment and placement on salary scales. In South Carolina, the state education association has filed a complaint under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 challenging the use of minimum NTE scores for certification. A favorable decision in a current Georgia suit could eliminate the NTE requirement for advanced certification and its potential restrictions on promotion and pay.

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[4] "The Awsome Danger of Intelligence Tests." *Ebony* 29: 68-70, 72; August 1974.

A precedential award in Association-supported litigations, including two major cases involving teacher test requirements, was announced early in 1975. A federal court in Mississippi ordered two school districts in that state to pay $106,000 in attorney fees, expenses, and court costs in cases in which it was alleged and determined that racial discrimination had played a part in employment decisions during a period of desegregation. One of the cases was brought on behalf of a group of Columbus teachers who were fired for failing to achieve minimum scores on the NTE; another case involved a group in Starkville who challenged required scores on the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE). Most of the teachers had previously won the right to reinstatement with back pay.

The NEA and the New Jersey Education Association are challenging that state's assessment program in order to prevent dissemination of standardized test scores which might violate civil and constitutional rights of both teachers and students, and cause racial and ethnic polarization by permitting degrading stigmatization and illegal classifications. The complaint has so far resulted in action by the State Board of Education to remove an ambiguous section of the administrative code that could have been interpreted to permit using test results in conjunction with other data to support disciplinary action against teachers.

Hobson v. Hansen (1967), in which the court abolished the track system in the District of Columbia public schools, was probably the landmark case tying standardized testing to denial of equal educational opportunity, in this instance to Black and economically disadvantaged students. More recently, two cases still in the courts in California are seeking to uphold the constitutional rights of culturally and linguistically different minority students by preventing the use of standardized IQ tests. The judge, the same in both cases, has found that standardized IQ testing causes a disproportionately high percentage of minority students to be placed in classes for the educable mentally retarded (EMR). In the case of *Diana v. the State Board of Education,* involving Chicano students, a stipulation was issued ordering local boards to come up with a formula to reduce the variance between the percentage of Chicano children in EMR classes and the percentage in the general school population; planning is still under way between the local school systems and the State Department of Education. The case of *Larry P. v. Riles,* brought on behalf of Black students, led to court-ordered stoppage of IQ testing of Black students in the state. The economic factor inherent in recent legislation making IQ testing in California optional at school district expense may also have tended to halt the practice with all students in some places.

LIAISONS

The initiating of dialogues with other organizations and agencies involved with test development, use, and research must be considered an important accomplishment of the Task Force. And it would be in the best interest of practitioners for the Association to continue the dialogues and to establish cooperative working relationships toward the goal of eliminating test misuse and abuse.

Standards Development Groups

The Task Force continues to be concerned over the lack of direct teacher involvement in the formulation of testing standards; for example, the American Psychological Association's (APA) *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing.* These standards were developed by a joint committee of the APA, the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). The Task Force pursued its concern informally with APA staff and followed up with a request to the APA Board of Directors to approve the inclusion of an NEA representative on the joint committee, which is launching a project to develop guidelines on evaluation of school programs. In a letter to APA, the Task Force chairperson said that "such representation should also explicitly provide that the NEA representatives be involved on a continuing basis with that group and any other group which may be constituted to give continuing direction to, substance and editorial advice on, and make decisions about acceptance, publication, and distribution of such guidelines." No action had been taken on that request at the writing of this report.

Testing Industry

In March 1974 the Task Force formally expressed its disappointment that the Educational Testing Service (ETS) had delayed enforcement of a cut-off in reporting NTE scores to South Carolina because they were being used for purposes of teacher certification, which even ETS considers a misuse of the test. The Task Force notes here that the enforcement was later effected, and commends the ETS action (and reiterates that the united teaching profession is presently seeking to eliminate the South Carolina requirement). The Task Force also welcomes ETS's recent expression of interest in the Task Force beliefs and its initiation of a meeting

early in 1975 with NEA and New Jersey staff representatives and the Task Force chairperson to discuss common concerns.

Federal Government

With project funding by the National Institute of Education (NIE) in mind, the Task Force was anxious to learn what is being done at the federal level to encourage research which could have positive impact on the future of testing. NIE spokespersons conferred with the Task Force and revealed that some projects already approved for funding reflect some of the Task Force concerns.

In this instance, also, the Task Force has broached the subject of teacher representation in those decisions which will affect their practice. Though it is aware that the work of NIE is in the public interest, the Task Force has registered its concern that the public interest will not be well served unless substantial numbers of teachers are represented in NIE goal setting and suggested that the Association be invited to appoint practitioners to all NIE panels. Rather than direct involvement, however, some NIE personnel seem to see NEA's role as lobbyist in the legislative process of defining parameters of NIE responsibility. Such indirect and after-the-fact involvement will continue to be unacceptable to teachers.

Another question put to the NIE spokespersons had to do with the Institute's interest in the establishment of a national center for certifying tests. The response was that at this time the extent of such interest probably would be in exploring the possibilities of such a center. This, of course, is the focus of a current NEA staff study described below.

The Task Force last year informed NEA Government Relations of their concern over the Quie amendment to the then pending H.R. 69 (revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) which proposed to tie educational funding to testing. It was pleased to learn that its concern was relayed and may have been a factor in the withdrawal of that amendment. The issue is now under formal study by both NIE and the General Accounting Office.

NEA FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR TEST CERTIFICATION

Although the Task Force fulfills its official responsibility with this report, it views a parallel staff assignment as an extension of its work and wants the general membership to be aware of it. Staff in the Professional Excellence goal area are currently conducting a study "to determine the feasibility of a system whereby the NEA certifies tests or other procedures for student or program evaluation" (Subobjective 1.4). Three Task Force members also serve on the nine-member advisory committee which is engineering the study.[5] At this writing the committee has established some useful contacts—with the APA, the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals. It has drafted a rationale for NEA certifying tests and the appropriate uses of tests, has outlined alternative strategies, and plans a field survey for the final quarter of FY 1974-75 to obtain reactions to the proposed procedure.

SPECIAL PAPERS

During its tenure the Task Force on Testing has initiated work on written statements to support and elaborate on some of its expressed beliefs. Various drafts of these papers have already been cited and utilized in some quarters both inside and outside the profession. All members of the Association should be aware of their existence. Three of the papers are in final form:

1. "Roles and Responsibilities of Groups Concerned with Student Evaluation Systems." This statement directs to specific groups recommendations which the Task Force considers essential for achieving the goals of sound and fair development of tests, their appropriate distribution and administration, accurate and fair interpretation of results, and relevant and constructive action based on the results. The groups addressed are teachers and their associations, other professional associations, students, minorities, the testing industry, school administrators, higher education, and government agencies.
2. "Why Should All Those Students Take All Those Tests?" This paper reflects the Task Force's opinions on random and matrix sam-

[5]Members of the committee are Jean Blachford, Pilialoha Lee Loy, and Lawrence Perales representing the Task Force on Testing; Norman Goldman, director of instruction and professional development, New Jersey Education Association; Margaret Morrison, guidance counselor, Rockville, Maryland; Gene V. Glass of the Laboratory of Educational Research, University of Colorado; and Bernard Bartholomew, Bernard McKenna, and Frances Quinto, NEA staff.

pling as opposed to blanket testing. It incorporates material developed by Dr. Frank B. Womer of the Michigan School Testing Service, University of Michigan, on determining the use of sampling procedures.

3. "Guidelines and Cautions for Considering Criterion-Referenced Testing." The concept of criterion-referenced testing (also termed objectives-referenced testing) has been promoted as potentially more useful than norm-referenced testing for measuring learning outcomes for the purpose of improving instruction. This paper attempts to define the criterion-referenced concept and to clear up some of the confusion which surrounds it. Fifteen caveats are listed and discussed. A glossary of measurement terms is appended.

Two other important statements which have been outlined require expertise that is beyond the time and capabilities of the Task Force in order to give them the highest credibility. These have been incorporated into and will be completed as products in the goal area, Professional Excellence.

1. "Some Potential Alternatives to Standardized Tests for Evaluating Student Progress and Diagnosing Learning Needs." Alternatives include criterion- or objectives-referenced tests, oral presentations by students, individual diagnostic tests, group diagnostic tests, teacher-made tests, student self- and peer-evaluation, open admissions, school letter grades, subjective evaluation by teachers, contracts with students, interviews, parent-teacher conferences, student narratives, student products, and actual student performance. This collection has promise as a handbook for teachers.
2. A unit or module for preservice and in-service teacher education pertaining to testing has thus far been outlined in two forms: schema and guidelines. This project stems from concern over the present inadequacy of training as expressed in the Task Force's belief No. 4 (see p. 79).

The Task Force sees all of the above as having potential, collectively, as an NEA "awareness kit" on testing issues.

SUPPORTIVE LITERATURE

The Task Force was impressed with much of the vast amount of literature that has been published on testing and its effects, and considers it appropriate to cite here a few recent items which influenced the formulation of Task Force beliefs or which support some of them. (Citations of other important resources will be found in previous Task Force reports.)

Blachford, Jean S. "A Teacher Views Criterion-Referenced Tests." *Today's Education* 64: 36; March-April 1975. Points teachers must consider as they "become part of the national movement toward criterion-referenced tests," and a plea for proper in-service education.

DeAvila, Edward A., and Havassy, Barbara. "The Testing of Minority Children: A Neo-Piagetian Approach." *Today's Education* 63: 72-75; November-December 1974. A challenge to industry's attempts at restructuring present tests to produce bias-free instruments, and descriptions of an alternative assessment model and a computerized system for use of test data both for general information and to individualize instruction.

Gartner, Alan; Greer, Colin; and Riessman, Frank, editors. *The New Assault on Equality: IQ and Social Stratification.* New York: Perennial Library (paperback), Harper & Row, 1974. 225 pp. Nine experts examine the past and present of the IQ controversy and draw some important conclusions about the role of IQ in society.

Goslin, David A. *Teachers and Testing.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1967. 201 pp. An exploratory study of the uses of standardized tests in schools, teachers' experience with tests and testing, their attitudes and roles.

Green, Donald Ross. *Racial and Ethnic Bias in Test Construction.* Monterey, Calif.: McGraw-Hill, n.d. Adapted from a federally funded study of the same title. The researcher found the need for changes in test construction procedures to produce unbiased instruments and suggests that research should be a standard part of producing a test.

Holmen, Milton G., and Docter, Richard. *Educational and Psychological Testing.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972. 218 pp. An evaluative study of the testing industry, its products, and how they are used, with action recommendations for "those who influence the gatekeepers in our society."

Mercer, Jane R. *Labeling the Mentally Retarded.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973. Federally sponsored study of "Clinical and Social System Perspectives on Mental Retardation" in an American community. In a popularized description of the study (see "IQ: The Lethal Label," in *Psychology Today* 6: 44-47, 95-97; September 1972), Mercer says that "schools seem to have the primary responsibility for identifying the mentally retarded" via the IQ test, which she concludes is inaccurate and unfair.

National Education Association. *Evaluation and Reporting of Student Achievement.* What Research Says to the Teacher series. Washington, D.C.: the Association, 1974. 32 pp. Review of selected research and literature on (a) purposes of evaluation and reporting, (b) their development in relation to different educational philosophies and teaching methods, (c) the best way to report achievement, and (d) evaluation to improve instruction.

Stiggins, Richard J. "An Alternative to Blanket Standardized Testing." *Today's Education* 64: 38-40; March-April 1975. An explanation of and argument for depending on random and matrix sampling in educational testing.

Weber, George. *Uses and Abuses of Standardized Testing in the Schools.* Occasional Papers, No. 22. Washington, D.C.: Council for Basic Education, 1974. 38 pp. Brief, clearly written critique of intelligence, aptitude, and achievement tests; their uses, limitations, and abuses; and discussion of current controversies surrounding standardized testing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force recommends that:

1. The Association incorporate the principles inherent in the stated beliefs of the Task Force on Testing (see pp. 79, 80) in any and all future official NEA policy on testing of students and teachers and the uses of tests and their results.
2. The Association continue the liaisons established by the Task Force with:
   a. The Joint Committee on Standards Development of the American Psychological Association, the American Educational Research Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education.
   b. The National Institute of Education.
   c. The Educational Testing Service. (The Task Force also recommends that the Association establish similar relationships with other members of the testing industry.)
3. The Association develop a strategy for establishing with other groups and organizations formal alliances for the purpose of combatting deleterious testing practices. These might include the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Association of Black Psychologists, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the National Urban League, the Civil Rights Commission, parent groups, and other educational organizations, e.g., Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
4. The Executive Committee approve the papers entitled "Roles and Responsibilities of Groups Concerned with Student Evaluation Systems," "Why Should All Those Students Take All Those Tests?" and "Guidelines and Cautions for Considering Criterion-Referenced Testing," and that the Association publish them as an information package for distribution to the leadership network and for general availability. It is further recommended that the proposed handbook on "Alternatives to Standardized Testing" and the proposed module on testing for preservice/in-service teacher education be made components of the information package.
5. The Association complete a thorough exploration of the feasibility of a system whereby the NEA certifies tests or other procedures for student or program evaluation. Such exploration is currently under way as a subobjective of the Professional Excellence goal area.
6. The Association temporarily set aside the moratorium on standardized testing as a national objective (as called for in New Business Item 28 adopted in 1972) in order to concentrate its energies in this area on lending support to affiliates as they implement strategies to challenge standardized testing; for example, initiating court actions on behalf of students or teachers, attacking specific test instruments, seeking alliances with other groups which have a vested interest in countering test abuse, cross-committee planning for remediation of problems related to testing, developing negotiation procedures and language dealing with testing issues.